

The Confederate Color Guard prepares to shoot Civil War-era guns to honor Confederate Captain Asa Chilcutt at a memorial service in Exeter in October. Details surrounding Chilcutt's murder were recently uncovered and a service held to honor his memory and provide a proper funeral.



Travis Archie, member of the Missouri Division Sons of Confederate Veterans, gives the eulogy at a funeral service on Oct. 10 for Confederate Captain Asa Chilcutt. Thomas Dilworth. Elias Price and Dr. Harris, who were murdered and buried in mass grave in the small patch of woods in 1863 which today is known as Packwood Cemetery near Exeter. Archie read a military account of a Confederate scout who witnessed many atrocities along the Arkansas-Missouri border in 1863, including the murder of Chilcutt



Civil War captain honored with funeral

150 years after his murder, Confederate captain laid to rest

In a small patch of woods on a perfect, sunny Saturday morning in October just west of Exeter, a funeral took place.

It was no typical funeral, but for a veteran who was murdered more than 150 years ago in the Civil War, Confederate Captain Asa Chilcutt.

To reach the area known as Packwood or Bushwacker's (Cemetery, marked only by a few scattered headstones — some no longer legible — attendees walked up an embankment and around trees. When they arrived at the small clearing, however, there was a fresh, new stone with words as clear as the morning.

The headstone was provided by the Veterans Administration, thanks to documentation supplied by (Campbell's Company Camp No. 2252 of the Missouri Division Sons of Confederate Veterans.

Finally, Captain Chilcutt could rest in peace.

"Finding these (Confederate veterans and remembering them as American veterans, this is truly what we're all about," said Travis Archie, member of the Confederate group who helped make the event happen. "We gave them the proper docu-

mentation about where he was buried and his military records. We're holding a memorial service for him that he obviously wouldn't have had in 1863. This is a dedication to give him a proper funeral."

Among attendees were landowners Jim Senters; his mother, Alice; Jack Fly, representing the Barry

(County Historical Society, the Turkey Creek Fusiliers; a (Confederate (Color Guard; a member of the United Daughters of the (Confederacy; Missouri Sons of (Confederate Veterans members; and Jim (Chilcutt, the great-great-nephew of (Chilcutt.

"Today, we have the opportunity to give a proper funeral to a hero



Turkey Creek Fusiliers member Steve Cottrell, who provides color guard services at veteran memorial events, reached down to place a rose on the grave of Confederate Captain Asa Chilcutt, who was murdered and buried in a mass grave in 1863 with three other citizens near Exeter.

that's 150 years overdue," Archie began the eulogy.

Jim Chilcutt, who did not know about Asa Chilcutt's existence until a family reunion 10 years ago, also spoke.

"We appreciate everyone being here and honoring a southerner, whether related or not," Chilcutt said.

The Senters, who've owned the land the cemetery sits on for 50 years, were aware of old headstones on their property, but had not heard of Asa Chilcutt and the three citizens, who, hiding and fearing for their lives, were also murdered and buried there, until the Barry County Historical Society and veterans group began researching the case.

"We moved here in 1955," said Alice Senter. "One neighbor always said there were bushwhackers up here, meaning mean people."

In 1863, Asa Chilcutt lived near Cassville with several brothers and their families. Military records show he had enlisted as a private in the Missouri 6th Cavalry Regiment and later was listed as Captain Asa Chilcutt, Adjutant in the 10th Regimental Cavalry 8th Division of the Missouri State Guard.

Due to full prisons in the early 1860s in Missouri, an order was issued by the St. Louis Military Office, authorizing



military to "take no southern prisoners." Thereafter, many southerners or suspected sympathizers had homes pilaged or were killed. Asa Chilcutt's story is referenced in the books "Borderland Rebellion," "Branded as Rebels" and "Caught Between Three Fires."

In Barry County, Confederates were allegedly hiding in the bushes and raiding forage trains carrying supplies. Union military personnel followed orders to "kill every bushwhacker you can find," as quoted by Union Colonel West in "Borderland Rebellion." However, some took orders to the extreme.

The following report was given by Captain Joseph G. Peevy in April 1863, a (Confederate intelligence officer to Lieutenant General Theophilus H. Holmes:

"They (the Federals), have murdered every southern man that could be found, old age and extreme youth sharing at their hand the same merciless fate. Old Samuel Cox and his son, age 14; Saul Gatewood; Heal Parker and Captain Duval of Missouri were a part of those murdered in Carroll. They burned 15 southern houses and all the outbuildings. None of those thus made homeless were permitted to take with them any clothing or subsistence. They seem to have hoisted the black flag, for no southern man, however old or infirm or however little he may have assisted our cause, is permitted to escape them alive. General, I have not the language to describe in truthful colors the ravages these Hessians are committing in the northwest of this state (Arkansas)."

"It was neighbor against neighbor," Archie said. "It was pretty bad."

Peevy's report continues: "West of Cassville in Barry County, a first lieutenant Robert H. Christian of the Missouri militia committed one of the most diabolical cold-blooded murders that I heard of on my trip. Four old citizens of that county had gone to the brush, fearing that by remaining at home they

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Jim Chilcutt, the great-great-nephew of Confederate Captain Asa Chilcutt, gave a humble speech at the memorial service for his uncle, who was murdered more than 150 years ago on his sick bed. Asa Chilcutt's brother, William Lee, escaped. Jim Chilcutt never knew of his uncle until learning about him 10 years ago at a family reunion.

"Our Chilcutt ancestors, as all southerners, suffered unbelievably during and after the war. Being in southern Missouri was a horrid place to be during that time."

- Jim Chilcutt

would be murdered. Their mimes were Asa Chilcutt, who was recruiting for the C.S. Army, Elias Price, Thomas Dilworth and Lee Chilcutt. Asa Chilcutt was taken very sick and sent for Dr. Harris, a southern man. The doctor came as requested, and while there, this man Christian and 17 other militia came suddenly upon their camp. Lee Chilcutt (Asa's brother) made his escape. The others were captured and disposed of as follows: Asa Chilcutt, the sick man, was shot to death while lying on his pallet unable to move. He was shot some six

or seven times by this leading murderer, Christian.

"They marched the others 150 yards to a ridge, and, not heeding their age or prayers for mercy, who were heard by the citizens living nearby, they shot and killed the doctor and the others, all of them were shot two or three times through the head and as many or more times through the body. This man Christian also tried to hire two ladies with sugar, coffee, etc., to poison southern men lying in the brush. Christian proposed furnishing the poison and also

the subsistence and would pay them well if they accepted his proposition.

I he names of the ladies are Rhoda Laton and Mrs. Simms. Every word of the above can be proven in every particular. I have given you the above narrative of Christian's acts at the request of the public living in that section. They look to you as the avenger of their wrongs."

An excerpt from a 1931 interview with Thomas Sallee of Exeter gives additional details:

"One of the most noted guerrillas in the country at that time was a fellow by

the name of Christian who claimed to be a Union man or Home Guard. I lis gang killed Asa Chilcutt, Tom Dilworth, Doc Harris and Elias Price, who were hiding in the hills west of where Exeter now is. The men were all shot in the right eye and the top of their heads blown off. Their brains were taken out and put in their hats, which were set beside their bodies.”

“He [Christian] was kind of a nasty fellow,” Archie said. “He was decapitating people in Barry, McDonald and Newton counties.”

“Our Chilcutt ancestors, as all southerners, suffered unbelievably during and after the war,” Jim Chilcutt said. “Being in southern Missouri was a horrid place to be during that time.”

“If you look back in history, there were atrocities on both sides,” said Larry Dietzel, member of the Missouri Division Sons of Union Veterans. “Missouri was a pretty ugly place to be in the 1860s. Depending on the point of view, there’s lots that was destroyed, and people lost their [lives] and farms.”

Time passed and details were lost to history. Until 44 years later on May 4, 1907, when a letter to the editor was received by the *Cassville Democrat*, in response to an article about a military account of the Civil War.

It reads: “Mr. Editor: I think the military history should have been extended a little. In speaking of Asa Chilcutt, and Thos. Dilworth being killed, not only them but Elias Price and Dr. Harris, also at the same time. Ye scribe was one of the boys who buried them all in one grave at the Packwood Cemetery.”

The sender was unknown, but could it be the son of Tom Sallee?

In 1864, Christian was shot and killed by a son whose father he had killed. The man carried Christian’s scalp for years to show widows and others Christian and his gang had wronged that he was dead.